

Leadership At All Levels: It's Not Just For Titles Anymore!

As of April 01, 2010

Health Objective: 23-8 Competencies for public health workers

Block Grant Funding: 75-99% - Primary source of funding

Issue:

In 2007, the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) began a quality improvement initiative in ten program areas. One of the project teams was given the topic of leadership development within the agency. Through a process of root cause and force field analysis, the team identified that the ISDH lacked a culture of leadership cultivation and development.¹ Analysis of survey data indicated that employees felt that leadership was meant for managers and supervisors only, and consequently, employees felt disempowered and trapped without opportunities to grow their leadership skills to improve job performance, expand job function, and rise to challenges and crisis events. Supervisors, by virtue of their position, were viewed as leaders, although employees felt that many of them were not skilled leaders.

Intervention:

The need for a leadership curriculum was identified as the solution to many of the issues identified. In 2008, the Quality Improvement Leadership Team developed a three-phase leadership development curriculum, including core, intermediate, and advanced courses, based on many nationally recognized sources and self-assessments. A core value of the team is that leadership exists and should be practiced at every level of an organization and is not dependent on position or title. Thus, an original vision of the team was to offer the curriculum to all ISDH employees and to eventually develop a method to offer the training to local health departments at low or no cost.

The curriculum was launched in the fall of 2008, and by December 2009, 156 ISDH employees had completed the core course, with 58 of them completing the intermediate course. Participants hear presentations, participate in class activities, complete homework "assignments" and self-assessments and have opportunities to practice skills learned. The core course provides a general overview of leadership concepts which include the differences between leadership and management, communication, dignity, emotional intelligence, mentoring, meta-leadership, crisis leadership, and others. The intermediate courses focuses on "the leader within" and includes concepts such as authentic leadership, ethics and values, motivation and passion, organizational change, self-discipline, time management, goal setting, and others. The advanced course, scheduled for the fall of 2010, focuses on using leadership skills to influence others. The entire program develops leadership skills that can be utilized in all facets of life and focuses on the individual, not a particular process.

Impact:

Participants have indicated via survey responses and personal stories the value and applicability of the leadership development program professionally and personally and have shared many ways in which they have used their skills to improve their programs and relationships. Several of them have embraced new challenges and opportunities; others have improved their supervisory skills. Moreover, the ISDH Executive staff supports this effort, as demonstrated in a seven-fold increase in funding from 2007-2008 through 2009. Many projects and initiatives were curtailed in 2009 in response to the influenza pandemic and other developments; the leadership program was sustained. Despite many challenges and competing priorities, including an influenza pandemic, the Leadership Team is committed to offering a quality program, now in its third year, to ISDH employees and potentially to local health departments throughout Indiana.

Success Story Contact Information:

Pam Pontones, MA
State Epidemiologist
Director, Epidemiology Resource Center
Indiana State Department of Health
phone: 317-233-7861
ppontones@isdh.in.gov

Block Grant Coordinator Information:

Indiana State Department of Health
Dawn Adams, PHHS Block Grant Coordinator
2 N. Meridian St
Indianapolis, IN 46204
Phone: 317-233-7679
E-mail: dawadams@isdh.in.gov
Web site: <http://www.in.gov/isdh/>

Footnotes:

1 Agency self-assessment conducted as part of the Public Health System Quality Improvement Program.

Quote:**Photo and Release Filenames:**

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